



Indiana State Department of Health

Epidemiology Resource Center

Quick Facts

Healthcare Associated Infections (HAIs)

What is an HAI?

A healthcare associated infection (HAI) is an infection that a person can acquire while receiving treatment in a healthcare facility for another condition. There are various types of HAIs which are often named after the site of the body in which they occur:

- Central Line Associated Bloodstream Infection (CLABSI) - An infection that occurs when germs enter the bloodstream through a central line.
- Catheter Associated Urinary Tract Infection (CAUTI) - An infection that occurs when germs enter the urinary tract through a catheter.
- *Clostridium difficile* Infection (CDI) - An infection in the bowel that is caused by *Clostridium difficile* bacteria.
- Methicillin Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) - An infection in a wound or in the blood caused by *Staphylococcus aureus* bacteria.
- Surgical Site Infection (SSI) - An infection that occurs after surgery, at the site where the surgery took place.
- Ventilator Associated Pneumonia (VAP) - A lung infection that can occur in a person who is on a ventilator.

What are the symptoms of HAIs?

HAIs can cause a wide range of symptoms. You may experience fever, pain, redness, or swelling if the infection is at a surgical site or near a central line. If the infection is in the gut or bowel, you may experience diarrhea and abdominal pain.

How can HAIs occur?

The germs that can cause HAIs can be spread in various ways. They can be carried on the hands of a healthcare provider or visitor, or they can be spread by touching dirty surfaces like door knobs and bed rails. Other HAIs are linked to the use of certain medical devices.

Who is at risk for HAIs?

Anyone receiving treatment in a healthcare facility can be at risk for getting a HAI. Patients who are very young or very old, as well as those with weakened immune systems, are more at risk. Patients who have been on antibiotics recently may also be at risk for developing a HAI.

How do I know if I have a HAI?

A HAI can present itself in many ways, and often times your healthcare provider will need to perform a test in order to be sure you have a HAI. They may take a sample of blood, urine, or stool to figure out if you have a HAI.

How can HAIs be treated?

Each HAI is different, so your healthcare provider will decide the best course of treatment for you. The treatment may involve taking medication or removing the catheter, ventilator, or central line.

How are HAIs prevented?

The best way to prevent HAIs is with proper hand hygiene. Patients, visitors, and healthcare providers should always wash their hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand gel. Healthcare providers might also use a cap, gown, gloves, and/or mask. Proper environmental cleaning is also a way to prevent HAIs. Cleaning staff should pay special attention to high-touch areas in a patient's room, such as door knobs, phones, and bathrooms. Proper antibiotic use is also very important in preventing HAIs. The misuse of antibiotics can lead to germ resistance, which can put you at increased risk for HAIs. For this reason, you should use antibiotics as prescribed by your healthcare provider.

All information presented is intended for public use. For more information about Healthcare Associated Infections, please refer to: <http://www.cdc.gov/hai/> or <http://www.in.gov/isdh/24769.htm>

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